

District 25 News

MAKIKI, TANTALUS, MCCULLY, PAPAOLEA

FEBRUARY 2009



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

The economy, maintaining the social safety net, consolidating schools, civil unions, ceded lands, preserving workers' benefits, campaign finance reforms—these are just some of the many issues under intense discussion and scrutiny by the 2009 Legislature.

Legislative staff members are always eager to take your input, but if you would like to meet face to face with area legislators, please join me, Representative Karl Rhoads, Senator Carol Fukunaga, and Senator Brickwood Galuteria for a Legislative Coffee Talk at Makiki Library located at Makiki District Park. We will be hosting a community meeting, in partnership with Friends of the Makiki Community Learning Center and Hui o Makiki, on Wednesday, March 4th from 6:00-8:00 pm. As we move further into the legislative process, citizen input is always welcome.

Hope to see you on March 4th!

With aloha,

Della Au Belatti
State Representative, District 25

Above photo—MAKIKI DISTRICT PARK (January 7, 2009)—L-R—Representative Tom Brower, Senator Carol Fukunaga, workshop presenter Virginia Beck, Representatives Della Au Belatti and Karl Rhoads share a photo after the “Informed Citizen” Workshop co-hosted by Friends of the Makiki Community Library, Hui o Makiki, and the Legislature’s Public Access Room. Mahalo to these legislators and to Virginia for coming to our neighborhood and sharing “best practices” for individual participation in our legislative branch of state government. Come back soon!

The Shortlist

Legislative Coffee Talk with our area legislators

Senators Brickwood Galuteria and Carol Fukunaga, and Representatives Rhoads and Belatti will present their mid-session legislative update to the community and host any questions about this year's legislative session. For more information about the event, call Rep. Belatti at 586-9425.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

Makiki Library, Makiki District Park
@ 6:00—8:00pm

Rediscover Makiki 2009 Planning Group Meetings (monthly meeting)

Seeking volunteer organizers to help fundraise, coordinate kids' activities, arrange MCLC library activities, and plan marketing efforts for this year's Rediscover Makiki.

EVERY THIRD WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH

Makiki Library, Makiki District Park
@ 5:30—7:30pm

Neighborhood Board No. 10 Meetings (monthly meeting)

Participate in one of our most basic forms of local government and best opportunities for community involvement, your local neighborhood board. No. 10 (Makiki/Lower Punchbowl/Tantalus) is one of 32 other local boards that meet every month to discuss neighborhood concerns and advise government. Join the community each month to share your ideas and hear what is going on in our neighborhood.

EVERY THIRD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH

Crafts Building, Makiki District Park
@ 7:00—9:00pm

Volunteers bring tax preparation services to Makiki

By MATT WINFREE

As the April 15th deadline to file personal income tax returns approaches, recent news has reported some particularly high-profile cases of people who have had considerable trouble filing their taxes. Not the least of these is the account of newly-appointed Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner, who recently paid \$43,000 in back taxes due to reporting errors dating as far back as 2001. If the nation's top financial officer is prone to such mistakes, it may be worth some extra time and effort this year to ensure that you're filing your taxes correctly.

Where to go

To bring this valuable assistance to District 25 residents, Representative Belatti has partnered with Friends of the Makiki Community Learning Center ("MCLC") and Volunteer Legal Services Hawai'i to organize tax preparation sessions at Makiki Library on March 28 and April 1. Volunteer Legal Services Hawai'i is an organization that provides free or low-cost legal help to low-income residents and the non-profit organizations serving them in communities across the state with the help of volunteers who contribute pro bono services.

Certified tax preparers from Volunteer Legal Services will be on-hand at Makiki Library to guide participants through the filing process and provide access to the convenient e-file system, which allows taxpayers to file returns electronically so that they can obtain refunds

quickly and easily. The event is free and open to the public. Call to reserve your spot. Walk-ins are also welcomed.

What to bring

If you are interested in attending either of the Tax Preparation Sessions at Makiki Library, or plan to work with any other tax preparation service, there are some important documents you'll need to bring to get the most out of your time with the tax preparer.

The list of documents to bring include:

- *Proof of identification*
- Social Security Cards for you, your spouse and dependents and/or a Social Security Number verification letter issued by the Social Security Administration
- Birth dates for you, your spouse and dependents on the tax return
- Current year's tax package if you received one
- Wage and earning statement (s) Form W-2, W-2G, 1099-R, from all employers
- Interest and dividend statements from banks (Forms 1099)
- A copy of last year's Federal and State returns *if available*
- Bank Routing Numbers and Account Numbers for Direct Deposit
- *Total paid for day care provider and the day care provider's tax identifying number (as well as the provider's Social Security Number or the provider's business Employer Identification Number)*

NOTE: To file taxes electronically on a married filing joint tax return, both spouses must be present to sign the required forms.

If you have additional questions about this event, please contact Matt from Representative Belatti's office at 586-9425. If you need tax preparation help but can't attend either of the MCLC Tax Preparation Sessions, you can find a list of sites endorsed by the IRS that provide similar services at <http://www.hawaiiitaxhelp.org/>.

For additional free community tax prep services sites, email belatti2@capitol.hawaii.gov and write "Tax Prep Sites" in the subject line, or call 586-9425 and ask for Matt.

Tax Preparation Sessions

offered by Volunteer Legal Services and MCLC

Makiki District Park
1527 Keeaumoku Street

Saturday, March 28
9:00am—12 Noon

Wednesday, April 1
5:00—7:30pm

Refer to the list of documents to bring.

Volunteer tax prep services

There are several non-profit organizations in and near the 25th district that are providing volunteer tax preparation services to those in need this year. These organizations will often create temporary offices for the duration of tax season that are open regularly or by appointment to help taxpayers with their returns. In other cases, these organizations will send volunteer tax preparers out to a particular location to service a specific community or neighborhood.

The case for campaign finance reform in Hawaii

By DELLA AU BELATTI

Bills recommending changes to Hawaii's campaign finance laws are inevitably introduced each year at the Legislature. 2009 is no different as several bills that seek to re-codify and substantially amend Hawaii's laws could have profound effects on the future of money and politics in Hawaii.

Two bills in particular are being considered by the House:

- House Bill 215, House Draft 1: Updates, codifies, and changes Hawaii's campaign finance laws. Changes include prohibiting contractors with state and county contracts from making campaign contributions only if these contractors enter into non-bid contracts and repealing the restriction that candidates can receive no more than 20 percent of contributions from Mainland donors during each campaign-finance reporting period.
- House Bill 539, House Draft 1: Allows companies to make contributions directly to candidates or candidate committees. Allows companies to make unlimited contributions to their own non-candidate committees.

On February 25, 2009, in a motion that I supported, the House recommitted House Bill 539 to the Judiciary Committee. Some supporters characterized this bill as simply allowing corporations to make contributions up to the same limits imposed on individual persons. This would mean that corporations could give up to \$2,000 to candidates seeking two-year offices (ie. State Representatives), \$4,000 to candidates seeking four-year non-statewide offices (ie. State Senators), or \$6,000 to candidates seeking four-year statewide offices (ie. Governor).

Despite this rationale, I opposed the passage of House Bill 539 and the relaxing of regulations on corporate campaign donations because such action would have diminished the voice of individual citizens and put our laws out of step with the rest of the nation. The steady trend over the past century has been to ban corporate campaign contributions altogether or to impose limitations on the amounts of monies that can be given directly from corporate treasuries to separate funds or



political action committees ("PACs"). The federal ban went into effect in 1907, and since then, twenty-two states have followed suit. Under its current form, Hawaii stands with 13 other states that impose limitations on amounts that corporations can place into their corporate PACs.

"[T]he methods of financing political campaigns should ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and allow maximum citizen participation in the political process."

- League of Women Voters of the United States, Position Statement, 1974 (revised 1982)

Although a re-committal essentially means that an idea has not gained the support it needs to pass into law, how a bill becomes a law can be a long and arduous process. Through House Bill 215 significant changes can still be made that will impact the flow of money, including corporate monies, into Hawaii's political system. If you would like to weigh in on any of the campaign finance proposals mentioned above, please contact my office to learn how to track these bills and submit testimony so that your voice can be heard.

Nominations sought for state campaign spending commission

The Judicial Council invites interested and qualified individuals to submit an application to serve on the Campaign Spending Commission.

The Judicial Council will appoint a panel of nominees, from which the Governor will select to fill current vacancies on the Commission. Individuals selected serve on a voluntary basis for a four-year term and may be reappointed one time. The primary duty of the five-member Commission is to supervise campaign contributions and expenditures. Commissioners may not participate in political campaigns or contribute to candidates or political committees.

Interested persons should submit an application, along with a resume and three letters of recommendation (attesting to the applicant's character and integrity) no later than the close of business on Friday, March 20, 2009 to the Judicial Council, Hawai'i Supreme Court, 417 South King Street, Second Floor, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813-2902.

[Application forms](#) are available on the Judiciary website at www.courts.state.hi.us or at the Public Affairs Office, Room 206-C, Ali'iolani Hale, 417 South King Street, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813. Requests for application forms may also be made by calling 539-4702.

District 25 News

To comment on something written in *District 25 News*, please write to:

Representative Della Au Belatti
State Capitol, Room 331
Honolulu, HI 96813
repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov

An electronic copy may also be downloaded from the House Majority Blog or the Representative's House Majority web page at http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hsemaj/.belatti_della.html.

Book fair comes to MCLC in March and April

By MATT WINFREE

Friends of the Makiki Community Learning Center ("MCLC") will be hosting a book fair at the end of March and the beginning of April. The book fair will highlight a Scholastic book sale, featuring new books geared to students from pre-K to 8th grade, as well as a large assortment of donated and used books from the learning center's adult collection. There will also be an assortment of donated furniture for sale at the event.

The book fair will serve several purposes. It will help to fund MCLC in an effort to continue to refine and improve the Learning Center and the events offered there. It will also bring the world-renowned Scholastic book fair to Makiki, an event that has excited children's interest in reading around

the world for over 87 years. In addition, due to the fact that the MCLC has no book-buying budget, patrons will have the unique opportunity to purchase books from the Scholastic book sale and then donate them directly to the library. The MCLC and Scholastic will provide book plates for insertion into each donated book recognizing the book's donor.

The MCLC accepts book donations for the fair or its general library on Sundays from 1pm to 3pm. The learning center is specifically looking for Hawaiiana, young adult, and large print books. The MCLC is also actively recruiting volunteers to help work the book fair. If you are interested in donating your time, please call Wendy Maxwell at 988-7411.

Scholastic Book Fair

The book fair is scheduled for the following dates and times at MCLC, Makiki District Park:

Wednesday, March 25	2:00pm-8:00pm
Saturday, March 28	9:00am-4:00pm
Sunday, March 29	12 noon-4:00pm
Wednesday, April 1	2:00pm-8:00pm
Saturday, April 4	9:00am-4:00pm
Sunday, April 5	12 noon-4:00pm

2009 Community Survey

Please spend a few minutes to read through and provide your comments on the following issues.

Many thanks to those who provided their responses to last year's survey. Survey results were compiled and published in the October/November 2008 issue of *District 25 News*. An electronic version of this and all other newsletters may be downloaded from the House Majority Blog webpage or Representative Belatti's House Majority webpage at http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hsemaj/.belatti_della.html. Your name and address are optional, but we will send responses only to those who provide their mailing information.

STATE ECONOMIC PRIORITIES

As we enter a period of economic uncertainty, state legislators will be tasked this session to prioritize spending, outline new policies, and make adjustments to old ones. Please rank the following ideas for spending in order of importance to you.

- ___ Ensuring energy self-sufficiency/sustainability
- ___ Investing in our natural, historic, and cultural resources
- ___ Maintaining high-tech tax credit
- ___ Streamlining state tax code
- ___ Funding UH system improvements
- ___ Maintaining funding for K-12 education programs
- ___ Improving state K-12 educational facilities
- ___ Improving traffic and pedestrian safety
- ___ Maintaining funding to ensure accessible basic healthcare for all
- ___ Maintaining funding for state social programs and community services
- ___ Improving infrastructure for agriculture (i.e. dams, reserves, irrigation)
- ___ Improving transportation infrastructure (i.e. roads, highways, harbors, airports)
- ___ Improving government operations and efficiency
- ___ Other _____

CONSUMER (PERSONAL) FIRECRACKERS IN HAWAII

Proponents for a fireworks ban argue that fireworks laws are becoming even more difficult to enforce and law-breakers and uneducated fireworks users create a strain on emergency services agencies, including fire, police and ambulance. A statewide ban (instead of allowing each county to decide for themselves) is the only proper solution to ensure illegal fireworks aren't transported between islands. And at least within Oahu's growing and dense urban core, fireworks play continues to be a public safety hazard to people, animals, and property and state laws much be changed to keep up with changing times.

Opponents against a fireworks ban argue that firework celebrations are long-held cultural and historic traditions that the public has a right to enjoy. A complete ban on fireworks seeks to take away this privilege from those who obey the laws, instead of just those who choose to break them. State lawmakers must continue to consider and work with other ways to regulate the sale and use of fireworks rather than imposing an outright ban including a tax surcharge, tougher criminal punishments, and tougher restrictions in urban areas.

Do you support a ban on fireworks? The following responses correspond with various legislative proposals to regulate fireworks.

- ☐ YES. I support a statewide ban on fireworks.
- ☐ YES. I support a ban on fireworks, but only on the island of Oahu.
- ☐ NO. I do not support a ban on fireworks.
- ☐ NO. I do not support a ban on fireworks, but I do support a surcharge tax on the sale of fireworks that will go to fund non-crucial State Department of Health programs.
- ☐ NO OPINION/NO ANSWER.

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THE STATE COMMISSION ON SALARIES

Since 2007, pay raises enacted by the Hawaii Commission on Salaries have affected leading members of all three branches of state government. Due to the harsh economic climate of our state, some have argued that it is inappropriate for these government officials to receive pay raises while the rest of the state's citizens are suffering. The Constitution provides the legislature with the ability to reduce the pay of government officials, however it also requires that legislators must decrease the pay of all those affected by the Commission's original recommendations. Such a decrease would affect state senators, state representatives, supreme court judges, the governor and lieutenant governor, and many other state employees.

With these facts in mind, do you believe that [please select the answer(s) that best represent your position]:

- ☐ The salaries of all applicable government officials should receive an across-the-board percentage decrease.
- ☐ There should be a freeze placed on all future pay raises until economic conditions improve.
- ☐ No action should be taken, and salary amounts should stay consistent with the salary commission's recommendations.

CEDED LANDS COURT CASE

Next month, the United States Supreme Court will hear *State of Hawaii vs. OHA*. This case involves the issue of whether the State has the authority to sell or otherwise transfer ceded lands to private entities, or whether the unsettled native Hawaiian claims to the lands should prevent the State from doing so.

Further, the Akaka Bill, should it pass, would create a governmental entity for native Hawaiians to settle land claims (and other issues) with the United States government. In light of these events, would you support a moratorium (a temporary prohibition) on the State's selling or transferring of ceded lands?

- ☐ YES. I believe that until native Hawaiian claims to the ceded lands are settled, the State should not sell or transfer ceded lands.
- ☐ NO. I believe the State should proceed with selling and transferring lands, and that native Hawaiian claims to the ceded lands can be settled later.
- ☐ NO OPINION. I have no opinion on this issue because I feel that it is a native Hawaiian issue, and I am not native Hawaiian.
- ☐ NO OPINION. I have no opinion on this issue.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name

Address

Phone

Email

- ☐ Please sign me up for e-updates.

COMMENTS

Please feel free to comment on any of the survey questions or other concerns.

Send your completed survey to:

Representative Della Au Belatti
State Capitol, Room 331
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813